

Message Text

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ACTION OS-01

INFO OCT-01 NEA-06 ISO-00 AID-05 CU-02 CIAE-00 INR-05

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SP-02 SAM-01 L-02 /026 W

----- 003981

R 271410Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9410

INFO AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

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KUWAIT ALSO FOR DOHA

E.O.: 11652: N/A

TAGS: OGEN, SA

SUBJ: AMERICAN SCHOOLS IN SAUDI ARABIA

REF : JIDDA 5095

SUMMARY: AFTER LONG STUDY THE SAUDIS HAVE AT LAST APPARENTLY APPROVED BUILDING AND EXPANSION OF THE FOREIGN SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE KINGDOM. ACCORDING TO PRINCE SULTAN, MINISTER OF DEFENSE WHO HEADED THE STUDY, THE SAUDIS WILL PROVIDE LAND AND BUILD BUILDINGS FOR THE SCHOOLS. THEY WILL BE ALLOWED TO FOLLOW FOREIGN CURRICULA; THE SCHOOL BOARDS WILL BE UNDER THE PARENTS. ARABIC AND AREA STUDIES WILL BE OFFERED. AND THE SCHOOLS MUST BE CONDUCTED IN A WAY THAT WOULD NOT OFFEND THE ISLAMIC RELIGION, WHICH PROBABLY MEANS SCHOOLS SEGREGATED BY SEX. WE HAVE NO PLANS FOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE KINGDOM, OR FOR THE EXPANSION TO THE NINTH GRADE IN RIYADH OR DHAHRAN. END SUMMARY.

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1. LAST SPRING THE AMBASSADOR ASKED PRINCE SULTAN, SAUDI MIN-

ISTER OF DEFENSE, TO ORDER SAUDIA AIR LINES TO EXPAND ITS FACILITIES TO TAKE CARE OF THIS YEAR'S STUDENT BODY. (THE JIDDA PARENT'S COOPERATIVE SCHOOL IS RUN BY TWA UNDER SAUDIA AND HAD REFUSED TO CONSIDER EXPANSION.) THE PRINCE AGREED AND SUFFICIENT CLASS ROOMS WERE BUILT TO TAKE CARE OF THE STUDENT BODY FOR THIS ACADEMIC YEAR.

2. THE AMBASSADOR TOLD THE PRINCE THIS WOULD BE ONLY A TEMPORARY MEASURE; THAT WE WOULD HAVE TO MAKE PROVISIONS FOR NEW AMERICAN SCHOOLS IN JIDDA, RIYADH, AND DHAHRAN FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 1, 1975; THAT HE WOULD BE BACK TO THE PRINCE FOR THIS DECISION ON THE FIRST OF SEPTEMBER THIS YEAR.

3. THE AMBASSADOR RAISED THE MATTER SEPTEMBER 2 AND HAS BEEN REPEATING HIS REQUEST TO PRINCE SULTAN ON EVERY OCCASION SINCE. THE ANSWER HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE SAME -THE SAUDIS UNDERSTOOD THE PROBLEM, THEY WERE STUDYING IT CAREFULLY AND THE AMBASSADOR WOULD BE GIVEN AN ANSWER SOON.

4. A COMMITTEE HEADED BY PRINCE SULTAN (THE DEFENSE MINISTER AND THEREFORE HIGHLY INTERESTED IN THE WELL-BEING OF FOREIGN CONTRACTORS) WAS SET UP TO STUDY THE PROBLEM OF EDUCATION OF FOREIGN STUDENTS IN THE COUNTRY AND SUGGEST MEANS OF HANDLING IT. THE COMMITTEE INCLUDED PRINCE FAHD, MINISTER OF INTERIOR; PRINCE MUSA'ID, MINISTER OF FINANCE; AND THE MINISTERS OF INFORMATION AND PUBLIC WORKS. THE COMMITTEE EXCLUDED, NOTABLY, THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND THE MINISTER OF AWQAF AND RELIGIOUS FOUNDATIONS.

5. ON NOV 24 THE AMBASSADOR TOLD SULTAN AGAIN THAT WE URGENTLY NEEDED THEIR RESPONSE. HE GOT THE MOST POSITIVE REACTION YET. ALL OF THE INVOLVED PRINCES, SULTAN SAID, HAD APPROVED HIS PROPOSALS. THE AMBASSADOR HAS ASKED FOR GRANTS OF LAND IN DHAHRAN, RIYADH AND JIDDA FOR THE SCHOOLS. THIS WAS ACCEPTED; IN FACT, PRINCE MUSA'ID SUGGESTED THAT THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT HAD AN OBLIGATION ALSO TO BUILD THE SCHOOLS.

6. SULTAN SAID THAT AN "ESTABLISHMENT" WOULD BE SET UP TO HANDLE FOREIGN EDUCATION; THERE WOULD BE MINIMUM OF SAUDI LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE; PARENTS WOULD BE REPRESENTED ON THE SCHOOL BOARDS; THAT CURRICULA FOLLOWED WOULD ENABLE STUDENTS TO CONTINUE THEIR STUDIES IN THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES ABROAD. HE SAID THEY WOULD EXPECT CLASSES IN ARABIC AND AREA STUDIES TO BE OFFERED AND "OF COURSE, THIS WOULD HAVE TO BE DONE WITH NO OFFENSE TO THE ISLAMIC RELIGION."

7. SULTAN SAID THAT THE MATTER WOULD BE TAKEN UP AT THE

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING NOV 24, OR AT THE VERY LATEST
NEXT WEDNESDAY, NOV 27; THE DECISION WOULD THEN BE MADE BY
THE KING AND IT WAS "99 PERCENT SURE" THE KING WOULD APPROVE
THE PROJECT.

8. COMMENT: ALL THIS IS ENCOURAGING. HOWEVER, SULTAN'S
STATEMENT ON NOT OFFENDING THE ISLAMIC RELIGION IS ALMOST CERTAIN
TO MEAN THAT SAUDIS WILL INSIST ON SEPARATE EDUCATIONS FOR BOYS
AND GIRLS, AT LEAST AFTER THE SIXTH GRADE AND POSSIBLE
AFTER KINDERGARTEN.

9. JIDD'S NINTH GRADE WILL PROBABLY BE MAINTAINED - UNLESS
THERE ARE FURTHER DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS - BUT THE SCHOOLS
ELSEWHERE IN THE KINGDOM WILL BE LIMITED TO KINDERGARTEN
THROUGH EIGHTH GRADE. WE HAVE NO RPT NO PLANS OR INTENTIONS OF
RAISING WITH THE SAUDIS THE POSSIBILITY OF OPENING AMERICAN
HIGH SCHOOLS IN SAUDI ARABIA.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974JIDDA06992
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740345-0313
From: JIDDA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974118/aaaaagpp.tel
Line Count: 133
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION OS
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: JIDDA 5095
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15-Aug-2002 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <12 MAR 2003 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMERICAN SCHOOLS IN SAUDI ARABIA
TAGS: OGEN, SA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005